

Restoring¹ Dominion²



SABBATH—JULY 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1:26–28; Psalm 8:3–8; Genesis 2:15; Romans 8:20–22; Exodus 20:1–17; Romans 1:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our likeness [image]. Let them rule over the fish in the waters and the birds of the air. Let them rule over the livestock and over the whole earth. Let them rule over all of the creatures that move along the ground’ ” (Genesis 1:26, NIV).

AT THE FALL our first parents lost the likeness (being made in the image) of God that they were created with in the beginning.

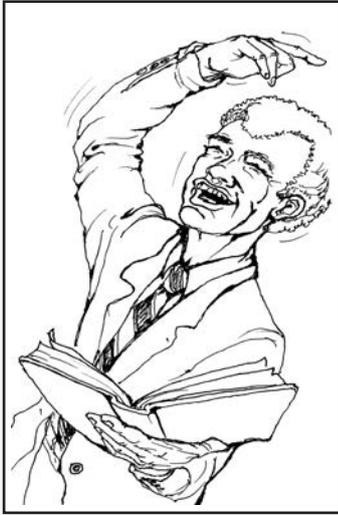
“Both man and the earth had by sin come under the control of Satan. But man was to be restored [brought back] by the plan of Redemption.³ At his creation, Adam was placed in dominion [control] over the earth. But when he fell into temptation, Adam was brought under the power of Satan. Then the dominion which he held was given to Satan. So Satan became ‘the god of this world.’ He had taken the dominion over the earth which had belonged to Adam. But Christ made a sacrifice that paid the price for sin. Jesus would both save man and take back the dominion which Adam had lost. All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second Adam [Jesus].”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1908.

No question, humanity lost much after the Fall, including the “dominion” that we had been given. What was this lost dominion? What did it mean when humans were first given dominion over the earth? What can the church do to help people regain some of what was lost after the Fall?

DEFINITIONS

1. restoring—returning something to its original condition by repairing it, cleansing it, and so on.
2. dominion—the power to rule; control of a country, region, and so on.
3. Redemption—Jesus’ act of saving people from sin and evil by His death on the cross.

CREATED FOR DOMINION (THE POWER TO RULE) (Isaiah 43:6, 7)



When we know that God has a purpose for each of us, we have good reason for confidence and rejoicing.

An atheist⁴ sometimes woke in the middle of the night, worrying about many deep questions: “Is this world truly the result of an accident? Is there really no design, no grand purpose to our lives and to the universe as a whole? Does my life have no meaning and purpose?”

After the Fall, the human race (group of people) lost much. We became separated from God and from one another. Even our relationship toward the earth itself changed. And we also began to struggle with knowing who we are and what the purposes of our lives are. Our problems are made much worse by the idea that our lives happened only by chance, with no plan or purpose built in by a Creator God.

What do the following verses teach about the purposes for the creation of all people? Genesis 1:26–28; Psalm 8:3–8; Isaiah 43:6, 7. What does “created for My glory [great praise and honor]” (Isaiah 43:7, NKJV) mean? How does “My [God’s] glory” relate to dominion?

As we can read in the verses in Genesis, whatever other reasons God had for creating Adam and Eve, He planned for humans to have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26–28). Together, Adam and Eve were to be God’s servants, reflecting (showing) God’s glory and character (thoughts; feelings; actions). Through them, God would care for and manage the rest of His earthly creation. Who knows how God’s glory would have been shown through them and their dominion over the world if sin had not happened?

But now through faith in Jesus, we surrender our lives to Him in faith and obedience and cooperate with Him. Then we can say with David: “The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me” (Psalm 138:8, ESV). We know that God has a purpose for each of us, so we have a good reason for confidence and rejoicing. This is especially true when we are surrendered to Him, so that His will can be fulfilled in us.

DEFINITIONS

4. atheist—a person who believes there is no God.

Suppose someone were to ask you, “OK, so what do you, as a Christian, say that the purpose of your life is?” How would you answer, and why?

THE RIGHT OF DOMINION (Genesis 1:26–28)

What is the “dominion” that humans were to have over the earth, as shown in Genesis 1:26–28?

The word *dominion* in the Bible comes from the Hebrew verb *radah*. This word shows a right and responsibility to rule. It suggests levels of power and authority. The human race is placed above the rest of the natural world. The verb *radah*, as used in the rest of the Old Testament, does not itself tell how this dominion is to be used, whether for good or for evil. But the setting of a sinless and unfallen creation shows that this power must have been meant for a kind and generous purpose in the beginning.

We may come to the same idea about subduing (getting control of) the earth in Genesis 1:28. The verb *subdue*, from the Hebrew *kavash*, also shows levels of power in which humans are placed above the earth. They are given power and control over it. Elsewhere in the Old Testament the verb *kavash* is even more forceful than *radah*. *Kavash* describes the actual act of gaining control by defeating someone or something by using force (Numbers 32:22, 29; Jeremiah 34:11, 16; Esther 7:8; Nehemiah 5:5). In many of these cases, the abuse of power is clear, and God is not pleased about it. But again, when we think about the Creation story, we think of a sinless couple (Adam and Eve) managing the earth. Their control of the earth can be pictured as a kind and generous service to creation for the Creator’s sake. It certainly was not about using the earth or nature in an unfair or selfish way that caused harm.

We find an extra idea about dominion in Genesis 2:15. In this verse, God puts Adam in the garden to dress (*abad*—to work, to serve, to till) and to keep (*shamar*—to prune, guard, protect, attend to, study, save) it.

Keeping this in mind, we discover that dominion is caring and loving stewardship⁵ or management. Within their relationship with God, our first parents (Adam and Eve) were to have all the tools and authority that they needed to rule well. This kind of loving dominion would have shown God’s love of His creation.

The word *dominion* today can have negative meanings, and it often does. But it certainly did not when first described in the Bible. What are some principles (important lessons) that we can take from this pre-Fall use of the word? How can we then use these principles to help us understand how to better serve whatever or whomever we have “dominion” over?



Dominion means caring and loving stewardship or management.

DEFINITIONS

5. stewardship—the activity or job of protecting and being responsible for something.

BOUNDARIES (LIMITS) (Exodus 20:1–17)

Does our dominion over “all the earth” (Genesis 1:26) show that there are no boundaries (limits) to our dominion? Bible history shows that dominion (or “stewardship”) must have boundaries.

For example, God told Adam that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was off-limits (read Genesis 2:15–17). So then, the first sin was related to stewardship. Adam and Eve overstepped the boundaries that God had set on their dominion. Creation is still suffering from that overstepping of boundaries (read Romans 8:20–22).

Read Exodus 20:1–17. What kinds of “boundaries” are set there for us in God’s law? What does the law tell us about the limits of human dominion?



We are to care for the earth and all its creatures.

DEFINITIONS

6. domination—the act of having too much control of or power over someone or something.

Throughout human history (for example, Pharaoh in Exodus 1–14; Herod in Matthew 2) to the end of time (read Revelation 13), powerful people controlled by Satan try to take control of things they have no right to control. They follow the way of Satan, who seized power and made himself “the prince of this world” (John 12:31). Dominion gone wrong becomes domination.⁶

On the other hand, some people refuse to accept the control of those things over which they need to have dominion (read Matthew 25:14–30; Luke 19:12–27).

Sin caused humanity to lose the level of dominion given at Creation. But our original dominion was not entirely lost because of sin. There is plenty that is within our current boundaries of responsibility. For example, we are to show self-control in our personal lives (read 1 Corinthians 9:25–27; Galatians 5:22, 23). And we are to take care of the earth and its creatures and of all that has been given to us by God (read James 1:17; Matthew 25:14–30). As Christians, we need to understand what our boundaries are. And then we need to work to be faithful stewards (managers; caretakers) within those boundaries.

What are some boundaries that you need to respect among your family, friends, and coworkers? What principles can we use to help us know what those boundaries are? (Read, for example, Matthew 7:1, 12.)

CARE OF THE EARTH (Genesis 2:15)

What principles can we learn from Genesis 2:15 about how we should take care of our planet?

Before sin, Adam and Eve were given responsibility as stewards over all that God had entrusted to them. They had control over plant and animal life. But after sin, all of nature seemed to rebel (turn) against our first parents in the same way that they had rebelled (turned) against God. Humans began to realize how powerless they were to control the elements (weather; agriculture; the animal kingdom).

“Among the lower animals, Adam had stood as king. So long as he remained loyal to God, all nature accepted his rule. But when he fell into sin, this dominion was lost. The spirit of rebellion [war against God], which Adam allowed into the world, spread throughout the animal creation. So the life of man, the nature of the beasts, the trees of the forest, the grass of the field, and the very air he breathed, all told the sad lesson of the knowledge of evil.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, pages 26, 27.

Today we still suffer from disasters in nature (floods, earthquakes, mudslides, storms, and so on). And in many places, the air and soil suffer from terrible pollution. We work hard to use technology⁷ and industry⁸ to protect ourselves. True, technology and industry may help us do this. But sometimes the same technology can damage our planet. So ecology⁹ is an important issue, especially when abuse of the earth can lead to great hardship for others.

“Seventh-day Adventists support a simple, wholesome [healthy] lifestyle. We do not believe in the practice of consumerism, which is the belief that it is good for people to spend a lot of money on goods and services. Nor do we believe that it is right to pollute the earth. We call for the wise use and control of the world’s resources, and a respect for all life.”—Adapted from “Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Environment,” 1995.

How do we keep the right balance in our attitude toward the earth? How can we practice being good stewards (managers) of the earth while at the same time avoiding the danger of caring more about the earth and the environment than we do about spiritual things? What wisdom might Romans 1:25 give us here?

DEFINITIONS

7. technology—the use of science and engineering to invent useful things or to solve problems.

8. industry—the process of making products by using machinery and factories.

9. ecology—a science that deals with the relationships between groups of living things and their environments.

RESTORING “DOMINION” (Deuteronomy 15:7–12)

Through the Fall we as humans have lost much. We have lost the kind of dominion that our first parents had in Eden. Christ came in order to restore to us what we lost.

And because of what Christ has done for us, we have been called by God to reach out to others. We are to help them regain in Christ the salvation and dominion lost at the Fall that He has given back to us. Our work will not be finished until the second coming of Jesus. But there is much that we can do now in reaching out to those who are needy and lost in the world. We can be used by God to help renew and restore people by helping those in need.

What do each of the following verses say can be done to help others regain some of the “dominion” lost through sin? Deuteronomy 15:7–12; Luke 14:12–14; 1 Peter 3:15; James 1:27; Isaiah 58:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:10.



We can be used by God to help renew and restore people by helping those in need.

As a church body there is much that we can do to help those in need. Sometimes it is as simple as giving someone food, clothes, or shelter. Giving relief is necessary. But something more is needed to help people restore dominion in their lives.

Yes, we must always be ready to give to others a reason for the hope that is in us. But we must also meet their physical needs and point them to a better way of life.

Each situation is different. The needs of each person are different. But we have been called by God to be a light and a source of healing and hope in our communities. This call is a very important part of what it means to be a witness to the world of the loving and saving God whom we serve. We must do all that we can to give hope to those in need. As Christians, we cannot do less. As we serve others, we are helping them learn what God is like. And, too, by meeting their physical needs, we are opening the way for their hearts to be reached by the Holy Spirit. This work is what Jesus did, and this is what we are called to do too.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Temperance¹⁰ and Dietetics,”¹¹ pages 202–206, and “Discipline,” pages 287–290, in *Education*; “Need for Self-Mastery,” pages 73, 74, in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*; “The Principles of Stewardship,” pages 111–113; “Sharing in the Joys of the Redeemed [the Saved],” pages 348–350, in *Counsels on Stewardship*.

It is hard for us as sinners in a greatly fallen world to imagine all we have lost through the Fall. Genesis tells us that Adam and Eve were to have dominion over the world. Then, right after they fell into sin, their relationship to the world changed because they were changed. The physical world itself was changed too. “The thorn and the thistle (Genesis 3:17, 18), the results of the Flood (Genesis 7:12), the desert and the wilderness, the sad cry of the earth for freedom (Romans 8:19–22) are some of the word pictures the Bible uses to describe the results of sin upon the world.”—Adapted from the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald® Publishing Association), volume 12, page 254. How thankful we should be for the plan of salvation. It will restore all that was lost.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Exodus 23:10–12; Deuteronomy 11:11, 12; and Deuteronomy 20:19, 20 do not have any connection with ecology. But what principles could we learn from them that could help us to understand our need to be good stewards of the environment? Also, how do we know if and when we have crossed the line from being stewards of the environment to being worshipers of it?
- ② Think about the natural world as we know it now. Is it a friend or an enemy? What good reasons can you give for your answer?
- ③ Discuss the question asked at the end of Sunday’s study about the meaning and purpose of human life. What answer would you give to someone who asked you that question? How should our answers differ from the answers of those who do not believe in God or salvation?
- ④ How can we restore the original meaning of the word *dominion*? How was dominion at first a good thing? How can it be a good thing today too?

DEFINITIONS

10. temperance—the practice of always controlling your actions, thoughts, or feelings so that you do not eat or drink too much, become too angry, and so on.

11. dietetics—the science that deals with how to plan and prepare healthy food.